

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

Chapter 2

Cutting and Connecting

Concerning Fundamentals

Each spring sees the opening of another baseball season. This is one of my favorite spectator sports, but every year there is one thing that bothers me about it. That is the way that semiprofessional, university, and sometimes even high-school stars enter the professional leagues and immediately display a skill that puts their veteran teammates to shame. There hardly seems to be any difference at all between amateurs and professionals. Amateurs play for pure enjoyment, while professionals play to make a living. The difference between them ought to be much greater.

In every confrontation with a real American professional team it seems that what we need to learn from them, besides their technique of course, is how uniformly faithful their players are to the fundamentals. Faithfulness to fundamentals seems to be a common thread linking professionalism in all areas. If we consider the American professionals as the real professionals in baseball, then I think we have to consider their Japanese counterparts, who tend to pass over the fundamentals, as nothing more than advanced amateurs.

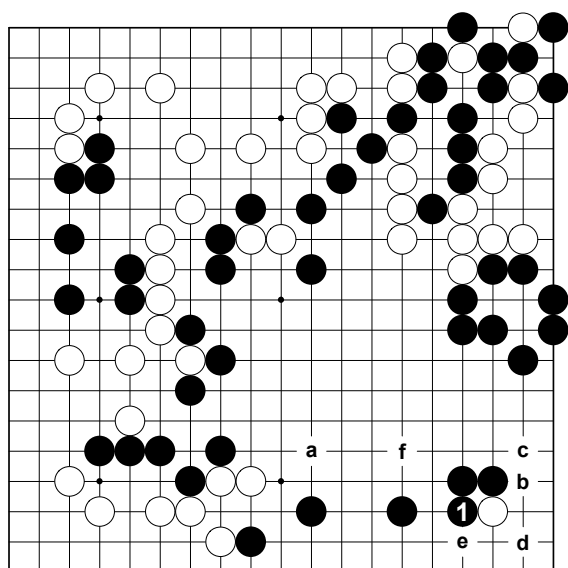
The reason for the lack of polish in Japanese baseball is probably just the short history it has in this country. Each year, when the visiting American team makes its tour, I sense an improvement on the Japanese side, so that in another few decades, or another century perhaps, when the necessary progress in technique and mental attitude has been made, I expect to see a world championship spanning the Pacific. I feel certain that no racial physical inferiority consigns us to second place. The opposite case, where the difference between amateur and professional is most striking, is Japanese sumo wrestling. There even the collegiate grand champion has to enter the professional ranks in the third division down from the top and work his way up while being treated like any other raw recruit. Collegiate wrestlers lack nothing in body, weight, or strength, and they are gifted with the advantage of intelligence. The potential is there, all right, but on the other side there seems to be what can only be termed a thick barrier between amateur and professional, built by a long tradition among professionals of almost superhuman effort. It takes more than just bodily size and strength to become a professional sumo wrestler.

In the world of go also, a long tradition of intellectual combat has distilled the professional into something that an amateur can never hope to become. A professional has undergone elite training in competition from childhood; he has learned to view every other person as an

opponent to be beaten down and crushed. His mental, physical, and emotional strength all have to be fully developed. If he lets up anywhere, it will show in his performance on the board and he will fail the professional test. The realm of competition is stark.

No professional regrets the time he has had to spend studying. 'I've never spent a minute studying in my life,' declares Yamabe, 9-dan. Let two professionals get into a post-game analysis, however, and they will go on endlessly, completely forgetting about time. Who will say that is not studying? The way young players have taken over the game can only be called terrifying. The time they spend studying every day defies the imagination.

Professionals do this unquestioningly. Even a gemstone has to be polished. 'A man is always moving either forward or backward,' says Kano, 9-dan. 'He never stands still. This should be every go player's motto, and he should keep piling effort on top of effort no matter what his age. He can be confident of always making progress.'



Dia. 1

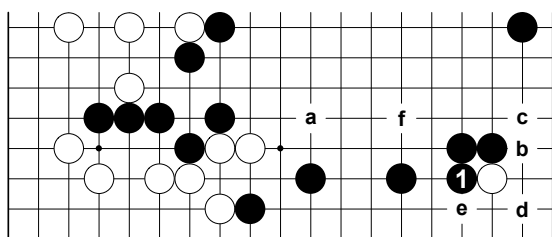
There was a game once in which Kano played the following move.

Dia. 1. (next page) Black 1 is the move that caught my attention. Looking at the commentary in the newspaper, I found the writer (Boku Shintaro) saying, '...and Black 1 firmly captured the white stone. Had it been us, we would have wanted to expand around 'a' and swallow up the stone on a larger scale. Sugiuchi, 9-dan, the commentator, had apparently read our mind, for when he reached this point he said, "Black's being exceptionally thorough, but

this seems to make the game close. It's probably correct. If he were behind, he would try a larger move — Black 'a', for instance." '

Provided it does not put him behind in the game, the move Black wants to make is the 'correct' one at 1. Any true professional would feel this way. As Sugiuchi said, however, a condition is that it not put Black behind, and if it does, then he can only try to enlarge his framework with some move like 'a', whether it be correct or not. The point of all this is that moves have to be chosen with regard to the balance of the whole board. To be overcome with admiration for the superficial correctness of Black 1 is to miss the real professional attitude. What actually went on in Black's mind before he played 1?

If Black omits 1, what exactly is there in the lower right corner? The answer is that there is the

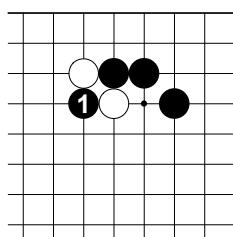


Here a stronger amateur interrupts to say, 'That may be so, but isn't Black I too tight? If a professional is so good at reading, shouldn't he have White 'b' etc. read out, and can't he play

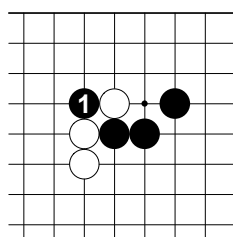
Absolutely right! Why can't he? The answer is that Black 'f' neither fully kills the potential in the corner nor fully takes control of the outside. It is a half measure all around. There are more examples like this in professional games than I could ever hope to mention. Any strong player, even an amateur, has the right to doubt, and wonder why professionals do not make more ambitious moves. One might even go so far as to wonder if professionals, too, are not subject to attacks of nerves. In the end, however, it all comes down to the professional's faithfulness to fundamentals.

18

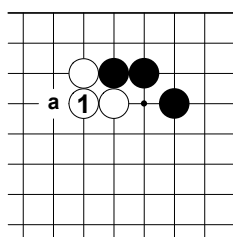
Cutting and Connecting



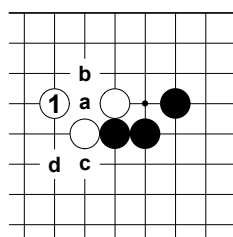
Dia. 1



Dia. 2



Dia. 3



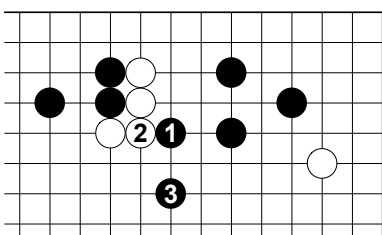
Dia. 4

Dias. 1 and 2. Black makes the cut at 1. If it is Black's turn in these two diagrams, he need not consider anything else. The cut is the only move. Cutting is the most basic tactic of all.

Dia. 3. If it is White's turn, the only move he need consider is connecting at 1 (or 'a'). If he does not connect, Black will cut. It's that simple.

Dia. 4. When White connects in this position 1 is the only move. White 'a', 'b', etc. would weaken the resistance at 'd' that he can offer to Black 'c'. White 1 is the best preparation for Black 'c', White 'd'.

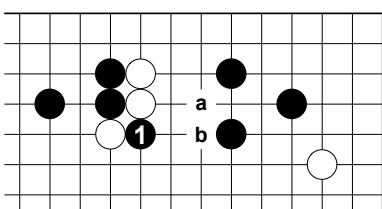
The cuts and connections in Dias. 1 to 4 are especially strong because they occur in close combat. They are urgent moves at any time, whether in the opening or in the middle game.



Dia. 5

Dia. 5. Don't peep where you can cut.

Can you perhaps recall a position like this where you peeped with 1, made your opponent connect with 2, then embarked on an attack with 3? Black 1, which peeps where a cut was possible, is a classic bad move, a so-called 'raw peep' in Japanese. This is not in the fundamentals.

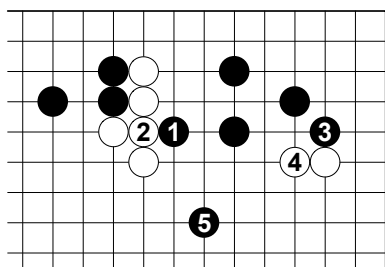


Dia. 6

Dia. 6. Cut where you can cut.

Black has to cut directly at 1. There are those who refuse to cut even though they know they should because they feel uneasy about White 'a' or 'b', especially if White is a

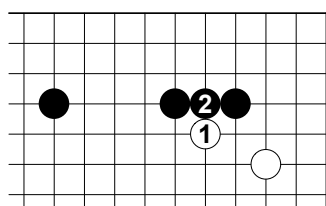
stronger player. They are frightening themselves unnecessarily. Leave the continuation for later. Right now, with the stones as they stand, the best move is the cut at 1, and if you can play it, why not? Cut where you can cut. That is a simple principle, and what is wrong with simple principles?



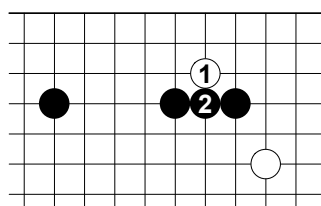
Dia. 7

Dia. 7. A good peep. Here Black cannot cut no matter how much he wants to because White has already connected. Black 1, White 2 is an un wasteful forcing exchange. Black 1 is a good peep. Black 5, jumping out to attack White, is a good continuation, although not as 'absolute as Black 1. What counts is being able to comprehend the whole position and find the move that fits it.

Dia. 8 and 9. Even a moron connects against a peep. White sometimes peeps as shown. If Black



Dia. 8

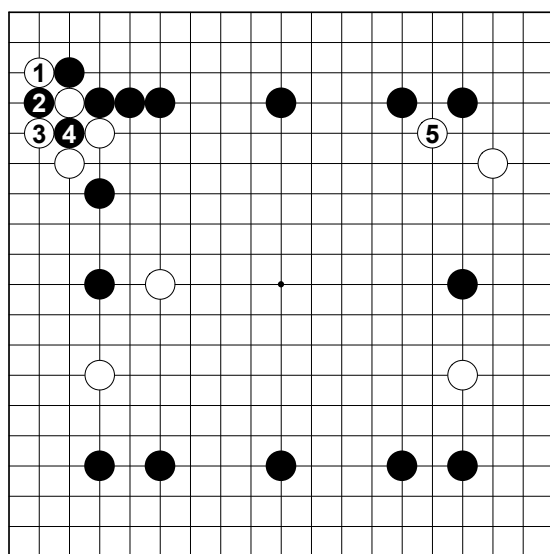


Dia. 9

does not connect, White will cut. Black's connection at 2 is correct, linking his stones firmly together. In actual play, however, there are times when this natural

connection cannot be made. That is part of what makes go interesting.

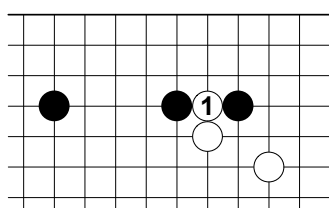
Dia. 10. This is an actual eight-stone handicap game in which an early ko fight has started in the



Dia. 10

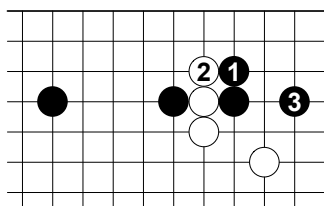
upper left corner. The ko is large, and as the proverb says, there are no ko threats at the beginning of the game. No matter where White plays 5, Black intends to connect the ko. The difference between winning it and losing it is so great from all standpoints — territory, influence, thickness, thinness — as practically to decide the game. If you keep looking at White 5, you start wanting to answer it, so when this kind of ko arises in an informal game, my advice is to capture at 4, then, while your opponent is thinking

over his ko threat, connect the ko and invite him to make two moves in a row wherever he likes, thus guarding yourself from temptation. That is how big this ko is.



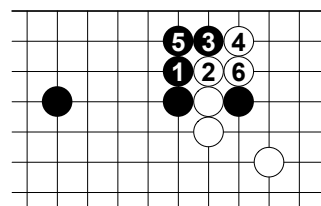
Dia. 11

Dia. 11. Problem for Black: when White pushes through at 1, how should he reply? Middle and upper level players miss this surprisingly often, which only proves that they have not grasped the fundamentals.



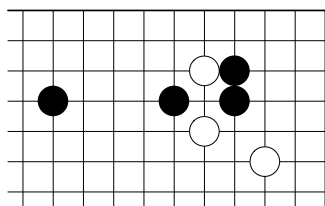
Dia. 12

Dia. 12. Black can stress the corner and live with 1 and 3.



Dia 13

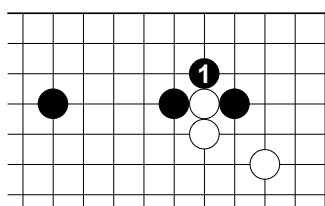
Dia. 13. Or he can stress the side and give up the corner with 1 to 5, a consistent sente sequence.



Dia. 14

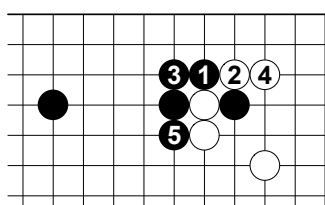
Dia. 14. A problem from a beginners' manual: Black to play — where should he move? White to play — where should he move? Can you see what I am driving at? Dias. 12 and 13 are a flop.

Dia. 14 is an extreme case of cutting and connecting. If White occupies the key point, Black has the same kind of result as in Dias. 12 and 13. How can it be good?



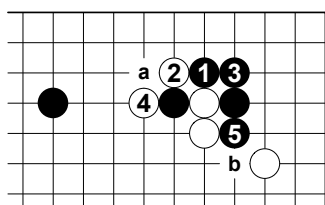
Dia. 15

Dia. 15. (correct) No matter what happens next, Black has to stop White at 1. If you start to think about what will happen if White cuts next you may lose your nerve, so don't think, just play Black 1. You can start thinking about White's cut after he makes it.



Dia. 16

Dia. 16. If White cuts at 2, Black 3 and 5 are better than Dia. 13 was. Do you understand why?

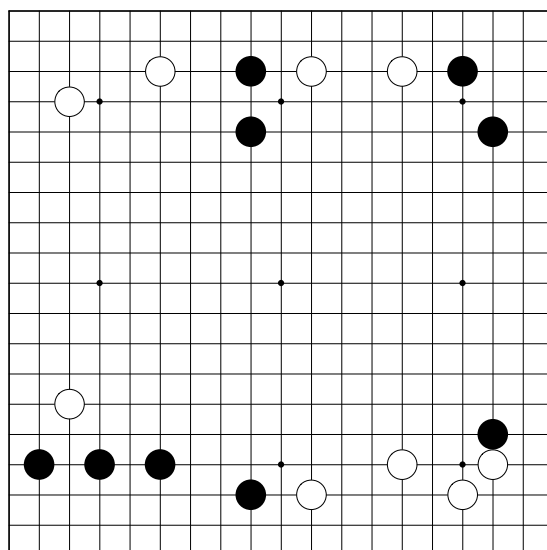


Dia. 17

Dia. 17. Cutting on the outside with White 2 is reckless. White is at at loss for a reply when Black pushes out at 5, and if he plays 4 at 'a', then his position collapses after Black 5, White 'b', Black 4. This is good for Black without question.

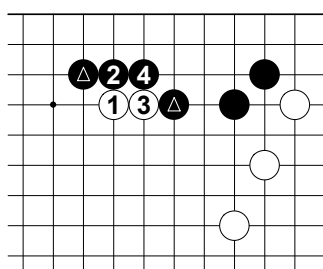
In close combat situations, where the opposing stones touch each other, you cut if you can and connect if you can. Many people know that much, but fail to realize that the idea of cutting and connecting applies to much more.

Dia. 18. (next page) Along the upper side we have a knight's move by Black, a two-space extension by White, a one-space jump by Black, and a large knight's move by White, all basic patterns. Everyone should recognize these as evolved forms of continuity, that is, connection.



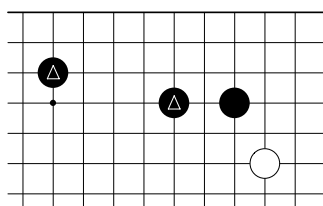
Dia. 18

On the lower side both Black and White are surrounding territory, but there is another way of looking at their positions, namely that both are made up of essentially continuous chains of stones.



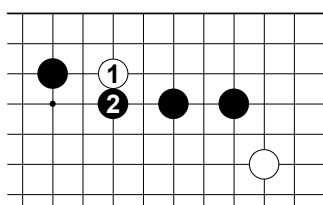
Dia. 19

Dia. 19. If White attacked Black's position with 1 and 3, anyone would answer with 2 and 4, but most people would think they were defending Black's territory. Few seem to think of these moves as preserving the continuity between the two marked stones.



Dia. 20

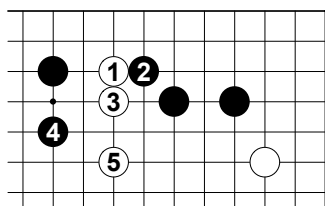
Dia. 20. This is a position that arises often in both handicap and even games. The marked stones form a three-space knight's move, which is quasi-continuous, the upper limit of continuity. If we think mainly of the continuity between these two stones, then —



Dia. 21

Dia. 21. When White invades at 1, we will try to maintain the continuity with the contact play at 2. This is naturally a good move. What can those who fail to play it be thinking?

Dia. 22. (next page) Perhaps they covet the upper side as territory. They dislike Black 2 in the previous diagram because it lets White live, ruining their territory. This they consider a loss, so they make two bad moves in a row at 2 and 4. To make matters even worse, they think they are



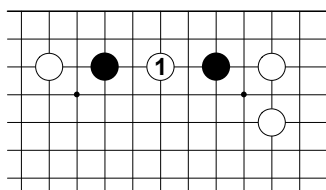
Dia. 22

doing well because they are attacking White. 'What's wrong with Black 2 and 4?' they demand in offended tones.

What's wrong is that they have completely missed the fundamental point. By playing 2 in Dia. 22, Black is destroying his own chances to connect. By making White play 3 and 5, he is cutting himself in half. Surprisingly many self-styled

'experts' play the game without comprehending this simple principle.

Dia. 23. All go players must have experienced many times the devastation caused by White 1 in



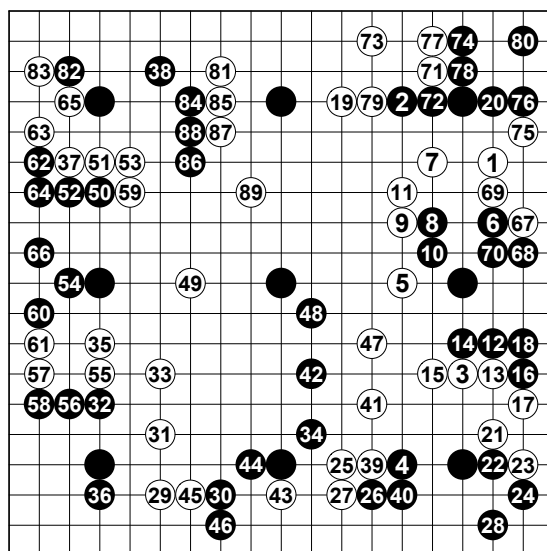
Dia. 23

a position like this. What makes Black's plight especially bad is that White 1 cuts him in two - destroys the continuity between his stones.

How, one may ask, can even a beginner, let alone a stronger player, play at all if he stops to think over every move like this?

From my own experience I would have to say that to play while constantly reminding yourself of these fundamentals is impossible. In fact, I would say that while playing, the fundamentals have to be handled subconsciously. For example, if you watch the way a star infielder moves in baseball, you will observe that no matter how difficult the bounce or how hard the line drive, he meets it frontally, faithfully following the fundamentals. The ball comes at him in a fraction of a second. The question is not how well he understands the fundamentals intellectually, but whether or not his body can respond instantly. What you are seeing is the result of long days of practice and effort. But go is different, isn't it? One does not have to play instantly. One has time to think during each move. True, but the game lasts for two or three hundred moves, and you cannot stop at each one to consider each of the fundamentals. You have to soak up the fundamentals as you practice on your own, studying them until they become a part of your very being. If the fundamentals do not operate subconsciously when you sit down to play, you have not mastered them yet.

Once there was a 1-kyu player who boasted that he would never lose at nine stones. 'I'll defend so firmly you won't have a chance,' he said. 'All right, we'll see,' was my reply, and this opponent, who beat me about half the time at six stones in practice games, put nine stones down on the board. How easily a few careless words can get one into things like this. I certainly had no confidence in the outcome.



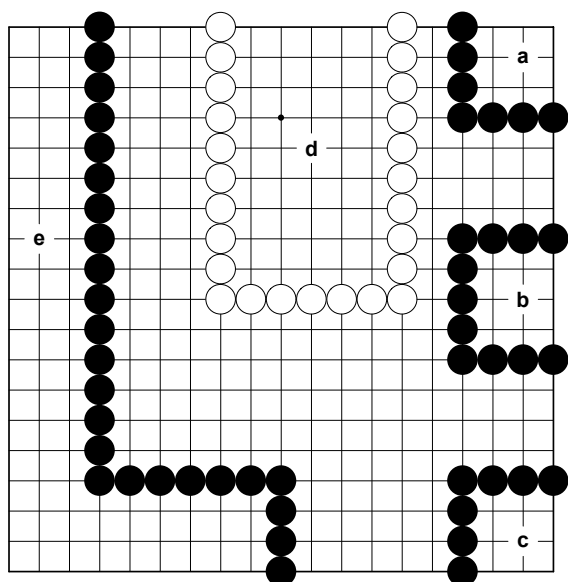
Dia. 24
(nine-stone game, to move 89)

Dia. 24. This is the game. It may be interesting as an example of what a professional can do in a handicap game when he applies himself. Although one notes a slack move here and there, Black did not make any really bad mistakes, yet by White 89 the game was already close~ and by the end I had won an easy victory. My 1-kyu opponent was staggered. He began to look upon professionals with new respect. That I liked but I was startled when he next accused me of just having gone through the motions in our previous six-stone games. If I had told him he was right, I would have lost a valuable pupil. This was a grave situation. I said, 'For you to lose at nine stones, when you usually give me an even fight at six, ought to be unthinkable, but now it's happened. There are various reasons why you lost, but the biggest ones were: (1) *You* got out of gear by thinking that with the extra stones, all you had to do was defend — make everything live — and you would win. If you had played your normal relaxed game, you wouldn't have lost so easily. (2) *You* completely ignored the first fundamental of cutting and connecting. It's not just a question of cutting or connecting during infighting. Look at the position up to White 89. Black's upper right corner, right side, lower right corner, lower side, lower left corner, left side, and upper left corner have all, in the large sense, been cut off by White. Each one is isolated. White's stones, in the large sense, are all connected, therefore strong.

'This is where you lost. This is a good example of what happens when you forget or ignore the fundamentals. I may have been playing with more than usual determination, but I think that is only natural for a person who has dared to give nine stones to an opponent who needs at most six.'

My opponent gave a deep nod, and I heaved a sigh of relief at having passed this crisis without losing one of my pupils.

When a beginners' text was being prepared for the start of a course in go at the Nihon Kiin's Central Hall in the International Tourism building next to Tokyo Station, S. Nakagawa, 7-dan, who is erudite in such matters, remarked that 'It's not just true in handicap go. The same- can be said in even games. Usually when you have five or six isolated groups of stones on the board, you're losing.'



Dia. 25

Without pressing this point further, I would like to offer you one last diagram, worth the proverbial thousand words. Look at Dia. 25. Black has three isolated territories on the right side, nine points each. With a total of 25 stones he has surrounded $9 + 9 + 9 = 27$ points of territory.

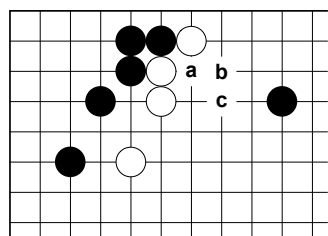
White, using the same 25 stones, has surrounded 45 points in the center and upper side.

Compare Dias. 24 and 25. This should make very clear what the 1-kyu player who thought he could win by just living and

avoiding capture had lost sight of. For reference, note that along the left side Black has surrounded 75 points of territory with, again, 25 stones.

Somewhere in the course of advancing from tesuji to shape to life and death, one forgets the simplest and most important things of all. Are there not many among even my stronger readers who received a mild shock at seeing this example?

Dia. 26. If it is Black's turn, there is no room for deliberation — just cut at 'a'. If it is White's



Dia. 26

turn, however, he can prevent the cut in various ways, so there is room for deliberation. Whether 'b' or 'c' is better is a difficult question, depending on the arrangement of stones to the right. Many cases are like this. There is only one way to cut, but several ways to connect, each with its advantages and disadvantages. If you thoughtlessly choose the wrong way, your connection may even turn out to be bad.